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# NT 520 New Testament Introduction

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**NT 520**  
**NEW TESTAMENT INTRODUCTION**  
**SPRING 2008**  
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**[N.B. THIS IS ONLY A DRAFT OF THIS SYLLABUS. WHILE THE  
REQUIRED BOOKS AND ASSIGNMENTS DESIGNATED SO FAR WILL NOT  
CHANGE, WHEN THIS SYLLABUS IS MOODLIZED FOR ONLINE USE,  
THERE WILL BE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS AND INFORMATION TO DEAL  
WITH IN THE WEEKLY MODULE ASSIGNMENTS]**

**CATALOG DESCRIPTION**

An introduction to (1) the literature of the New Testament in its socio-historical, literary and canonical contexts; and (2) critical study of the New Testament.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course is intended to help you begin to weave yourself through the maze of NT studies. During the course we will be exploring several major subject areas: 1) the history of the period in which the NT was written; 2) the social and cultural milieu in which early Christians lived; 3) the practice of the scholarly study of the NT (source, form, redaction, genre, rhetorical criticism, et al.); 4) questions of introduction about the books of the NT (authorship, date, audience, structure, purpose); 5) the practice of exegesis and hermeneutics.

In terms of the cognitive content of this course there are two major components:  
1) the lectures; 2) the textbooks.

**COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

In this course I intend to introduce you to the major areas of New Testament study: 1) the history, archaeology, and social milieu of the period in which the NT was written; 2) the practice of NT criticism; 3) questions of introduction about NT documents (authorship, date, audience, structure); 4) literary, rhetorical, and theological analysis of the NT; 5) exegesis and hermeneutics. Since most of you will be going into some form of pastoral leadership, we will be examining the NT material with a view to seeing how you can best instruct your parishioners in the Word. We live in an age of Biblical illiteracy and therefore the pastor must assume pedagogical tasks in training Sunday School leaders and other laity in the proper use of God=s Word. We will address issues of methodology as well as content in helping you gain skills in approaching the NT.

In this course I expect for you to: 1) begin to develop competence in reading the literature on the NT, and using basic commentaries and tools; 2) begin to explore the different areas and disciplines and aspects of NT studies; 3) learn how to do basic

research and writing in NT studies; 4) begin to gain an understanding of the crucial nature of studying Biblical texts in their original contexts; 5) begin to understand and develop skills in basic exegesis and hermeneutics so that sermons, teaching lessons, counseling material can be prepared.

The student who successfully completes this course and masters its material will be well prepared, if they have also taken their Biblical languages, to take an exegesis course and/or a course in Biblical theology. NT 520 is foundational for the rest of the theological curriculum in that it provides the necessary historical background and foundational materials so that the theological questions can be raised in a way that takes into account that ours is a historical religion, and theological truths are rooted in historical events (e.g. the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus). In our study of the Bible as literature, we will also discuss how the Bible has served as one of the cornerstones of education in the humanities throughout the ages, and how mastery of skills in reading the Bible helps in reading other classic texts that are a basis of a good education in the humanities.

In addition, the detailed study of first century culture and customs will serve as a reminder that ours is a religion that began in a culture very different from our own, and by its evangelistic nature has always intended to cross ethnic and cultural boundaries to reach people for Christ. The student who successfully crosses the cultural boundaries into the world of the NT will, in principle, have developed a mode of approach that should be applicable by analogy to such efforts with contemporary non-Western cultures.

Finally, since it is the Wesleyan principle that >the world is our parish=, and since John Wesley also insisted that we as Christians should focus on the Word of God above all other resources, we will attempt to deal with Biblical Interpretation in a way that encourages both a global missionary commitment and a continual focus on God=s Word as a part of life long learning. In part, this will be accomplished by a stress on the use of different types of Bibles and translations with different audiences which allows the reaching of a wider group of people and also facilitates and encourages the ongoing study of the Word. We will review the basic Bible study tools necessary for any good teacher to convey the truths of God=s Word.

Having completed this course, students should be able:

- (1) to articulate how one=s beliefs about Scripture impinge on how one engages biblical texts in interpretation;
- (2) to identify a range of questions (e.g., historical, literary, canonical) that might be addressed to particular New Testament texts and explore those questions in the process of interpreting particular New Testament texts;
- (3) to identify significant, critical resources for New Testament study and deploy those sources critically in New Testament study;
- (4) to probe the interplay of theology and ethics in the various New Testament writers;
- (5) to demonstrate awareness of the significance of the original languages for understanding and interpreting the New Testament; and
- (6) to integrate these concerns and methodologies in a sound hermeneutical method.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There will be ONE test, a mid-term exam. This will be an online test, but it will not be an open book or open note test. It will be an open brain test! You will, however, be able to use your Bibles (just don't copy all your class notes into your Bible!). You will be allowed to take whatever time you want on these tests during the week in which the test is given (i.e. you will have a one week opportunity to see the test on the web site and take it). The mid-term will be given early in March.

There will be a term paper of no more than ten pages of text (plus notes and bibliography) on some subject related to the five areas covered in the course, as listed above. It is due the second Friday in April. Sample term papers are available online. I will expect you to follow the standard format set forth for such papers in Turabian or the Chicago Manual of Style. You should be prepared to use eight to ten good sources for your paper. The Bible and Webster=s dictionary do not constitute sources. Non-scholarly ad hoc resources like Wikipedia do not count as sources. Resources listed in your text books as primary and secondary sources do. I would recommend using 2-3 good articles and 4-5 good commentaries or NT monographs. Log into Asbury Scholar here (<http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information>) and you can survey the possibilities. Finally, a book review or book critique is due the fourth week of the course. You may choose one of the required texts or the extra credit reading for this 5-page review, or you may choose another book dealing with the NT; however, you must run it by the professor first. I will also expect a one page reading report the first week of May telling me precisely how much of the required reading you have done. This will indeed affect your grade.

The percentages are as follows: 1) book critique 20%; 2) term paper 40%; 3) reading 20%; 4) participation in class in the weekly discussions 20%.

## REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS.

- 1) B. Witherington, The New Testament Story (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004). pb
- 2) B. Witherington, New Testament History, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001) pb.
- 3) B. Malina, The New Testament World, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster/J. Knox, 1998) pb.
- 4) J.B. Green, et al. eds The Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, Downers Grove: I-V Press, 1993 (hb)
- 5) G.F Hawthorne, et al. eds. The Dictionary of Paul and his Letters, Downers Grove: I-V Press, 1993 (hb). These two dictionaries are excellent reference tools. If you already have these and are looking for more detail, try the Anchor Bible Dictionary (multiple volumes). The latter is done by authors that range from conservative to liberal, while the I-V dictionaries are done by Evangelicals.
- 6) B. Witherington, The Living Word of God (Waco: Baylor Press, 2007). (hb)

EXTRA CREDIT H. Shanks and B. Witherington, The Brother of Jesus (San Francisco: Harper, 2003) and B. Witherington, The Gospel Code (Downers Grove: IV Press, 2004). You must read and give a one page book review of each of these two

books. If done well, this will result in an additional 2 points added to your final average (e.g. if one finishes with a 91 average, one would then end with a 93 average).

### READING SCHEDULE

It is very important that you keep up with the reading schedule. In fact, I would encourage you to start early and get ahead. The course is basically divided into five parts (see the course description above), but we are parceling the reading out over the first three parts of the course, giving you some leeway and catch-up time at the end.

**N.B. READ THE LIVING WORD OF GOD FIRST, BEFORE OR AT THE BEGINNING OF THE START OF THE SEMESTER.**

For the NT history, archaeology, social milieu portion of the course, which comes first, please read all of the two Witherington books as a general introduction and also read Malina, which is more focused on the social world issues.

For the NT criticism portion of the course, you should read some of the following articles in The Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels: 1) form criticism; 2) Gospels (genre); 3) Gospels (historical reliability); 4) Historical Jesus, Quest; 5) Jesus in non-Christian sources; 6) L Tradition; 7) Languages of Palestine; 8) Literary criticism; 9) M tradition; 10) Myth; 11) narrative exegesis; 12) Q; 13) redaction criticism; 14) rhetorical criticism; 15) Sociological approaches to the Gospels; 16) Synoptic Problem; 17) Synoptics and John; 18) Textual criticism.

For the third portion of the course, in addition to finishing the above articles, you should read in The Dictionary of Paul and his Letters: 1) Apocalypticism; 2) authority; 3) Chronology of Paul; 4) Hermeneutics; 5) Letter forms; 6) Old Testament in Paul; 7) Paul and his Interpreters; 8) Paul in Acts and Letters; 9) Paul in early church tradition; 10) Rhetorical criticism; 11) Social scientific approaches to Paul; 12) Textual Criticism.

For the fourth portion of the course, all articles on individual Gospels and Letters in the two dictionaries should be read (e.g. John, Gospel of; Romans, letter to).

### COURSE SCHEDULE

Weeks 1-3: Will be dealing with history, archaeology, the social world

Weeks 3-8: Will be on NT criticism

Weeks 9-11: Will be on NT Introduction

Weeks 12-13: Will be on exegesis and hermeneutics

### SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

The first assignment due will be the book critique. It must be submitted during the week mentioned above. The Mid-term will be given early in March. The term paper will be due as scheduled above, and the reading report is last of all.

**EXL ASSIGNMENTS--** There will be posted in the class room a question for discussion, each week of the class (twelve weeks, not counting reading week). You are expected to post two responses--- one to the question itself, and one to another student's response. I will be monitoring this each week. The question will appear in the classroom

each Monday, and will be taken down on Friday. The exam will also be posted in the classroom. There is, in addition, a DVD coming your way with brief lectures. You should have watched them all by the time we get to the end of March. I would suggest watching about two per week. They serve as a representative sampler of the course material and cover the gamut of its subjects.

You may submit your papers electronically by attaching a document to an e mail message; however, the format you use must be user friendly for me. This means one of the following formats needs to be used for me to download: 1) Microsoft Word; 2) Word Perfect 11. Please specify the format in the email message with the document.

#### VIRTUAL SUPPORT CONTACT INFORMATION

For **technical support, library research support, library loans, and Virtual media** contact Information Commons: [Info\\_Commons@asburyseminary.edu](mailto:Info_Commons@asburyseminary.edu) Phone: (859) 858-2233; Toll-free: (866) 454-2733

For **general questions and administrative assistance regarding the Virtual program**, contact Dale Hale: [ExL\\_Office@asburyseminary.edu](mailto:ExL_Office@asburyseminary.edu) Phone: (859) 858-2393

#### **Accessing Information Commons Materials**

##### 1. General Questions:

a. The Information Commons is a "one-stop shop" for all student research, circulation and technical needs. The Information Commons hours are posted here:

<http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/hours.htm>

##### 2. Materials Requests:

a. To search the library catalog for available materials, click here:

<http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/index.htm>

b. Virtual Students may request books, photocopies or emailed attachments of journal articles/portions of reference books from Asbury Seminary's Library. Please allow 3-10 business days for all requests to be filled. Contact the Information Commons for costs and instructions on how to make requests.

c. Virtual students are encouraged to make use of local library resources. Students who live within a 50 mile radius of either the Florida or the Kentucky campus should come to campus to obtain their materials.

##### 3. Research Questions:

a. Virtual students are encouraged to contact the Information Commons for research assistance including help determining the best sources to use for a paper, finding book reviews, or research questions about using the online databases or any other library materials.

#### 4. Online Databases:

a. To access the online library resources including the library catalog and full-text journal databases, go to <http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/index.htm> and enter your 10-digit student ID# number in the login box. Your student ID# is provided on the biographical information section of the student registration webpage. Add a 2 and enough 0's to the front to make a 10-digit number (20000XXXXX where XXXXX = your student id).

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#### **ONLINE SECTION DESCRIPTIONS AND COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES**

The Virtual Classroom is built upon the open-source Moodle platform. By logging into <http://virtual.asburyseminary.edu> you will have access to this course and be able to collaborate with participant-colleagues and me throughout the course. The following are functions with which you should familiarize yourself:

1. The **Course Information Center** contains many features to be used throughout the semester:
  - a) **Course News and Announcements**, where I will post items important for the entire class;
  - b) **Syllabus**, where a copy of the syllabus is provided;
  - c) **To Professor**, which is a way for you to post a message directly to me and we can discuss an issue privately;

- d) **Course Questions**, which is a public forum where you can publicly post any questions you have regarding the course so others may see your message and respond. Anytime you have a question or comment about the course, the schedule, the assignments, or anything else that may be of interest to other participants and me you should post it to the Course Questions Forum;
  - e) **Prayer Forum**, which is a public forum where you can post prayer concerns and praises for all to see. This is a way for us to build community;
  - f) **Open Forum**, which is a public forum where you can post anything that is not course-related for all to see. Examples include someone getting married, an upcoming birthday, discussions on topics not course-related, etc. This is a way for us to build community.
- 2. **Modules**, which are located below the Course Information Center, will contain forums where group discussions will take place, documents or other files to download or view online, and assignment links where you will post your assignments to me. Modules will be clearly labeled so you can follow along during the semester.
  - 3. **Resources**, a section located on the left side, provides links to items you may want to use often in the semester.